



# National Kidney Foundation<sup>®</sup>

of CONNECTICUT

February 28, 2008

To Members of the Public Health Committee for the State of Connecticut

My name is Kimberly Hathaway and I'm the CEO for the National Kidney Foundation. Part of our mission is to increase the availability of all organs for transplantation, and we do so through public education and by supporting public policy for the good of organ donation.

Currently there are more than 3,500 people on dialysis. The National Kidney Foundation of Connecticut spends approximately \$20,000 a year in financial aid for dialysis families who need help paying their rent and utility bills. The poorest patients depend on State Medicaid to help them to and from their dialysis treatments three times a week. . It costs nearly \$70,000 for a person to be on dialysis for a year, while a transplant costs only \$13,000 a year after the initial cost of surgery and recovery. Dialysis is much more costly than transplantation.

Connecticut law allows a person to have thirty days leave without pay if they are a living donor. Very few can afford a month without income; there are often airfare and hotel costs associated with the donation as well. This keeps many from being able to donate to their family member or friend.

The National Kidney Foundation has worked closely with the state of Connecticut to develop prevention education programs for people at risk for chronic kidney disease, but the increase in obesity, diabetes and high blood pressure has tremendously increased the number of people now facing dialysis. As of February 2008, 617 people are now waiting for a kidney transplant.

To face the increasing number of needed transplants, our Connecticut transplant centers are already working to become the top centers for transplantation in the country. Yale New Haven Hospital has greatly strengthened its liver transplant program and hopes to soon offer small intestine and lung programs, both of which can be served by living donation. The tax benefits of growing this part of our health industry are obvious.

On behalf of our members from around the state of Connecticut, I'm asking you today to support HB#5631 providing a tax deduction to cover the expenses of living donors. This incentive would cost the state less than \$100,000 a year. In 2007 there were 40 transplants provided by living donation – even if that figure doubled, it would still be a savings. We believe the passage of this bill will be fiscally responsible and morally correct in supporting organ donation.  
Thank you.

Kimberly Hathaway, NKF CEO  
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